

J.C. Gatti House (Dean Scott House)
Clifton Townsite
109 Riverside Avenue
Clifton
Greenlee County
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-196

HABS
ARIZ
6-CLIFT,
24-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

J.C. GATTI HOUSE (Dean Scott House)

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Location:

Clifton Townsite, 109 Riverside Avenue, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

Significance:

Associated with J.C. "Champ" Gatti, a pioneer cattleman of Graham and Greenlee County and a prosperous merchant. Also associated with the development of Clifton.

Description:

This one-story brick house is a lone remnant of the residences which once lined Riverside Avenue. The site is now overgrown with weeds. The house is of the Neo-classical style, and has a roughly rectangular plan. The exposed red-brick walls rest on concrete foundations. The roof is hipped, with gablet dormers at the front and back, and is sheathed with asphalt shingles. An additional gable dormer appears above the porch roof. Sheet metal cresting appears along the ridge of the roof, and the gable ends are filled with fancy-cut wood shingles and decorative diamond-pane windows. The eaves are enclosed and are supported by wooden brackets. Concrete steps lead up to the porch. Simplified Doric columns support the roof of the porch, resting upon a low wall covered in wood shingles. A wooden lattice serves as a partial porch enclosure. The windows of the house have been boarded up, although the concrete lintels and sills can still be seen. Two brick chimneys are finished with brick corbels and dentils. A small shed addition sheathed in aluminum siding has been made to the back.

History:

This brick residence was constructed in 1914 for cattleman John C. Gatti. After Gatti died in 1932, it passed to W.T. "Skeet" Witt, a prominent stockman, sheriff, and county supervisor. In later years it was acquired by the Scott family and was home to Dean Scott, a painter for Phelps Dodge Corporation.

J.C. "Champ" Gatti was a pioneer cattleman of Graham and Greenlee County and a prosperous merchant. In later years he invested heavily in real estate and reaped many profits. Gatti owned several slaughter houses in Clifton over the years and operated the Clifton Meat Market where he sold his wares. He traveled extensively in Mexico and the Southwest purchasing cattle to supply the needs of the residents of Clifton and Morenci. He received annual contracts from the Arizona Copper Company, Detroit Copper Company, and Shannon Copper Company to supply their stores with meat. Gatti built business buildings in the Chase Creek area of Clifton and speculated heavily in California real estate in the vicinity of Santa Monica. A Republican, Gatti was active in community affairs, by sponsoring an Italian colony near Duncan and adopting one of the New York foundlings. The legality of these adoptions was contested by the New York Foundling Hospital which brought suit and appealed the case to the Arizona Supreme Court. That case is known as New York Foundling Hospital v. John C. Gatti (see HABS No. AZ-165 for more information about this case).

Gatti left Clifton in 1920 during the post-war economic slump and devoted his time to managing his California real estate. He died in Santa Monica, California, in July of 1932.¹

By 1913 Gatti had settled in the prestigious Riverside Park addition to Clifton. This subdivision was surveyed and platted by Wythe and Lucia H. Denby in 1897. Located around the bend in the San Francisco River from Clifton proper, the Riverside Park addition was desirable because it was located away from the dirt and noise associated with the smelter town of Clifton. By 1904 the Shannon Copper Company had located its hospital in the subdivision and several doctors and company officials made the area their home.²

A fire in October of 1913 shattered the peace of Riverside Park. A gasoline stove in the residence rented by the F.O. Seifort family exploded, consuming that residence in fire. The fire quickly spread to six other residences in the area, including that of J.C. Gatti. A reporter for the Copper Era newspaper noted that a lack of water pressure contributed to the spread of the fire which was "spectacular in the extreme." Seven houses were consumed by the flames, and the Shannon Copper Company Hospital and adjoining doctor's residence were badly damaged. The residence of J.C. Gatti, valued at \$1,700, was destroyed.³

In typical fashion, J.C. Gatti refused to let the fire slow him down. In December of 1913 he announced that he would rebuild on the same site. In January of 1914 Gatti retained architect Duncan McNeil to draw the plans for his "splendid" residence (for more information on McNeil see HABS No. AZ-190). Gatti awarded the construction contract for his new house to the Clifton firm of Vandercook and Black. He estimated that he would spend \$6,000 to construct a "modern" residence on his lot in Riverside Park addition. The house was completed in April of 1914. Lucia C. Gatti, John C. Gatti's wife, moved into the house in her husband's absence. John Gatti was buying cattle in Mexico at the time.⁴

After Gatti died in 1932, the property was acquired by W.T. "Skeet" Witt, a prominent stockman, sheriff, and Greenlee County Supervisor. In later years it was acquired by the Scott family and was home to Dean Scott, a painter for Phelps Dodge Corporation. Dean Scott died on August 22, 1992.⁵

Sources (endnotes):

1. Copper Era March 15, 1900 (l, 12: 1-3); October 11, 1900 (l, 3: 2-3); January 10, 1901 (l, 3: 1); November 15, 1906 (l, 3: 1); June 20, 1907 (l, 2: 1); January 14, 1909 (l, 3: 1); August 8, 1919 (l, 1: 5); October 8, 1920 (l, 5: 3); December 10, 1920 (l, 1: 1); June 30, 1922 (l, 6: 1); July 30, 1932 (l, 1: 6).
2. 1908 Arizona Copper Company base map; 1904 Sanborn fire insurance map; Subdivision map of Riverside Park Addition located at the Greenlee County Recorder's Office.
3. Copper Era October 17, 1913 (l, 1: 1); November 14, 1913 (l, 5: 4-5).
4. Copper Era December 19, 1913 (l, 1: 5); January 9, 1914 (l, 1: 3); April 10, 1914 (l, 5: 2).
5. Interview with Harriet Sweeting, December 17, 1993; title information provided by William J. Acton, Tucson.

Historian: Robert G. Graham, AIA, Ryden Architects, Historical Architect/Project Coordinator

Douglas Kupel, Consulting Historian

Ryden Architects
645 North 4th Avenue, Suite A
Phoenix, AZ 85003

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